United Nations TD/B/WP/274

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
29 June 2015

Original: English

Trade and Development Board
Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget
Seventy-first session
Geneva, 7–9 September 2015
Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 3: International trade[1]

Executive summary

The Trade and Development Board, at its sixty-first annual session, requested the UNCTAD secretariat to conduct an independent evaluation of subprogramme 3 (SP3) on international trade. SP3 is implemented by the Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities (DITC).

SP3 has been relevant and responsive to the needs of its stakeholders, and has made material contributions to strengthen understanding, analysis and policy formulation capacities in a large number of countries. The subprogramme has a record of achievements and cooperation with other UNCTAD divisions and a number of international and regional agencies. A commitment to promoting economic growth through trade, strong technical expertise, a network of experts and convening power as a United Nations agency have contributed to results despite limited extrabudgetary support.

However, there are challenges in demonstrating synergies and concrete outcomes from the research publications and intergovernmental consensus work. The evaluation found that SP3 cannot effectively communicate its offerings, comparative advantage and key messages in the absence of a proper communications strategy, and that results indicators are inadequate. A robust results framework is necessary to track evidence of specific country-level impacts linked to programmatic interventions.

To respond to sustainable development goals, improve resource allocation efficiency and increase interdisciplinary synergies, the evaluation recommends an integrated divisional programme, with appropriate change-language indicators, and incorporation of the following: joint publications; interlinking gender and environment dimensions with trade policy formulation; pilots for interdivisional joint promotion and programming; an integrated communications strategy; and exploring beneficiary accountability in the results framework.

[1] This evaluation was prepared by an independent evaluation team: Mr. SV Divvaakar, with Ms. Jaime Moody and Mr. Juan Carlos Sanchez Troya. Supporting materials are presented in document TD/B/WP(71)/CRP.2.

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I. Introduction and brief descriptions of subprogramme 3 and the evaluation methodology

1. The Trade and Development Board, at its sixty-first annual session, agreed with the conclusions of its subsidiary organ, the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget, which included a request to the UNCTAD secretariat to conduct an independent evaluation of subprogramme 3. The objective of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of SP3 in relation to its mandates and to propose enhancements as appropriate. The Working Party will consider the results of the evaluation at its seventy-first session.

2. To carry out this evaluation, UNCTAD recruited a team comprised of an independent consultant and two member State representatives who participated in their personal capacity. The evaluation covers three biennial work programmes (2010–2014) and was conducted from January to June 2015.

3. Subprogramme 3 has the objective of ensuring the effective, qualitative and beneficial participation of all countries in international trade. It consists of two components: component 1 on international trade; and component 2 on commodities. The scope of the evaluation is confined to component 1.

4. Expected accomplishments for 2014–2015 are targeted under the following four broad areas (with some minor changes in text for the bienniums under evaluation, for which see annex A, table A1 of document TD/B/WP(71)/CRP.2):

(a) Strengthened understanding and capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to integrate beneficially into the global economy and the international trading system.

(b) Enhanced capacities of developing countries, middle-income countries and countries with economies in transition, in trade and trade-related decision-making and addressing the trade and development impact of non-tariff measures.

(c) Enhanced capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to prepare and implement national and regional competition laws to address the challenges arising from global economic crises.

(d) Strengthened capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to design and implement mutually supportive trade, environment, climate change and sustainable development objectives in development strategies at all levels.

A. Outputs under the three pillars of UNCTAD

5. Outputs of SP3 under the three pillars include the following:

(a) Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies (regular budget). Substantive servicing of meetings and parliamentary documentation for UNCTAD and relevant United Nations bodies and processes.

(b) Other substantive activities such as regular and non-recurrent publications (e.g. analytical studies and handbooks).

(c) Technical cooperation. Advisory services, training courses, seminars and field projects.

6. SP3 is implemented by DITC through its four branches – Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy; Trade Analysis; Competition Policy and Consumer Protection;

and Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development (TED) – and the Trade and Gender Section (TGS).

B. Resources

7. SP3 had total biennial resource allocations of $30 million to $35 million during the period under evaluation. Extrabudgetary support (donors) represented 34 per cent of total resources in 2010–2011, but fell to less than 20 per cent in 2012–2013 and 2014–2015, as shown in table 1.

Table 1
Subprogramme 3: Biennial budgets
(In thousands of dollars)

	2010–2011	*2012–2013*	*2014–2015*
Regular budget: Post	22 196.1	24 689.2	23 832.3
Regular budget: Non-post	553.0	591.0	675.0
Subtotal	**22 749.1**	**25 280.2**	**24 507.3**
Extrabudgetary	11 820.0	5 786.0	5 787.0
Total	**34 569.1**	**31 066.2**	**30 294.3**
Posts	**71**	**70**	**67**

C. Evaluation design

8. The evaluation seeks to assess the relevance, effectiveness (including impact) and efficiency of SP3 through a set of questions as listed in the terms of reference and in the evaluation matrix (annex B and annex C). The evaluation is based on the five criteria for evaluations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the United Nations: relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The evaluation also addresses two cross-cutting objectives: gender equality/women's empowerment and green economy/environmental sustainability. It follows the principles for evaluation of DAC and the United Nations.

9. The evaluation team collected information through an extensive literature review; interviews with UNCTAD staff, delegations and counterparts in other international organizations; field missions to Ecuador, Peru, Lesotho and South Africa; interviews by telephone and/or Skype; and an e-mail survey. Inputs were provided by 286 persons.

II. Findings, assessments and conclusions

A. Relevance

1. Alignment with UNCTAD mandates and internationally agreed development goals

10. UNCTAD's main objective is to assist developing countries, especially least developed countries (LDCs), and countries with economies in transition in integrating beneficially into the global economy, in support of inclusive and sustainable growth and development.[2] Its overall programme is guided by the decisions adopted by the quadrennial Conferences, the Trade and Development Board and its subsidiary bodies. SP3 is guided by mandates from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII)

[2] A/68/6 (Sect. 12).

held in Accra in 2008 and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIII) held in Doha in 2012, which reaffirmed the Accra Accord and further elaborated UNCTAD's mandate under the theme of development-centred globalization.[3]

2. Stakeholder needs and priorities

11. The principal target beneficiaries of SP3 are trade and trade-related policymakers and stakeholders from all developing countries and economies in transition, particularly in Africa, LDCs, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States (SIDS) and other structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies, as well as middle-income countries.

12. SP3 offers a diverse portfolio of expertise in the four branches of DITC and follows a combination of responsive and anticipatory approaches in addressing stakeholder needs and designing activities. Member States note that the subprogramme:

(a) Helps strengthen analytical, technical and negotiating capacities and helps countries implement a complex array of trade agreements.

(b) Supports building awareness of the linkages between trade policy and development, reviewing national policies, regulations and institutions to respond and adjust to opportunities and challenges, and establishing competitive, inclusive, consumer-friendly and environmentally sustainable economies.

(c) Provides analytical expertise on the growing number of international economic, social and environmental covenants, and assists countries in anticipating future needs emanating from treaty obligations.

13. Member States express a high regard for UNCTAD's professionalism, understanding of their development priorities, neutrality and flexibility and relevant expertise in multiple areas, and credit UNCTAD's enormous institutional knowledge and experience in trade and development issues and its pool of international resource persons. The 174 responses to the e-survey provide useful insights for the evaluation (figure 1 and figure 2).

Figure 1

UNCTAD is the principal institution providing assistance to developing countries, particularly least developed countries, countries with economies in transition and structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies to integrate into the multilateral trading system

[3] Accra Accord, paragraphs 89, 90, 94, 95, 97, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106 and 107 and Doha Mandate, paragraphs 18, 31 (d), (f), (g), (h) and (k), 33, 36, 37,41, 42 and 43–56.

3. Comparative advantage and value added

Figure 2

UNCTAD offers unique/differentiated expertise to developing countries' policies, laws and institutions

14. With regard to trade negotiations and accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), member States cite that other than UNCTAD, WTO is the main provider of technical support and training. The International Trade Centre (ITC), South Centre, Third World Network and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) are also noted as organizations developing countries turn to. In the area of competition policy and consumer protection, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, European Commission, Federal Trade Commission of the United States of America, International Competition Network (ICN) and OECD provide knowledge, training and assistance in establishing regulations and institutional capacities. The trade, environment and sustainable development space includes the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and World Wide Fund for Nature, as well as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), in addition to private non-governmental organizations, dealing with global regulations, standard setting, treaty obligation implementation and certification and enforcement functions. With regard to trade and gender, many agencies, including the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, focus on mainstreaming gender into national policies and processes, though very few focus on mainstreaming gender into trade policy.

15. Stakeholders note that UNCTAD provides valuable support to LDCs and developing countries in pre-accession and accession stages in ways that others cannot, particularly the technical assistance service of the WTO. Unlike WTO, which can only address technical aspects related to rules and must refrain from any policy advice, UNCTAD's mandate tasks it to provide advice on policy options and alternatives for acceding States and backstop the accession process. UNCTAD has flexibility to advise on bilateral and regional trade agreements, which are beyond the mandate of the WTO.

16. The work of UNCTAD on trade policy in general and services in particular stands out for its specialized approach and methodology, and its *Service Policy Reviews*, which member States note as a unique offering that deepens trade policy frameworks.

17. With regard to competition policy and consumer protection, the comparative advantages of UNCTAD stem from its mandate as the focal point in the United Nations for all matters related to competition policy, from its three decades of work on the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices and from servicing the intergovernmental group of experts. UNCTAD has been

instrumental in creating and periodically amending the model law, which has a development orientation, and recognizes the public interest dimension and importance of micro and small enterprises. UNCTAD fills a critical gap left by ICN, whose constituency is made up of States that already have national competition regulators, and OECD, whose membership consists mainly of developed economies with more advanced markets.

18. With regard to trade analysis, UNCTAD has strong niches in its long-standing work (over four decades) on trade statistical tools, data analysis and, more particularly, the classification and nomenclature of non-tariff measures, which have now become accepted as the official classifications due to its partnerships with the African Development Bank (AfDB), ITC, World Bank and WTO.

19. The work of UNCTAD on biotrade has been pioneering. Respondents credit UNCTAD with invention of the term biotrade, and its tools and methodologies for impact assessment, promulgating traceability systems for products involving endangered species and being at the forefront of creating a United Nations platform for sustainable standards.

20. Despite the crowded space, the evaluation finds UNCTAD has a special niche and value added proposition in almost all areas of SP3, though more pronounced in the areas of competition policy, trade policy and capacity-building (including services), trade analysis (specifically non-tariff measures) and biotrade.

4. Gender issues

21. SP3 does not list gender-specific targets under its accomplishments. However, relevant indicators for UNCTAD as a whole are the number of initiatives mainstreaming a gender perspective (12 in 2012–2013 and 20 in 2014–2015) and the percentage of women beneficiaries (40 per cent in 2010–2011 and 39 per cent in 2012-2013). As a result, assessments under gender issues focus on the outputs of TGS, which was moved into DITC in 2013 and consists of one full-time regular budget staff member, one part-time extrabudgetary staff member and consultants. TGS has created a strong body of work on the gendered dimensions of trade and development, assessed under subsection B on effectiveness.

B. Effectiveness

1. Achievement of targeted results in 2010–2014

22. SP3 makes specific contributions to enhancing human, regulatory and institutional capacities in developing countries across all regions, particularly in Africa, LDCs, landlocked developing countries, SIDS and other structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies, as well as middle-income countries and transition economies, to engage more effectively with the international trading system; to undertaking policy formulation and implementation, as well as comprehensive services work balancing national priorities and international treaty obligations; to formulating or strengthening policies and human and institutional capacities towards competitive and consumer-friendly marketplaces; and to improving understanding of the linkages and trade-offs between growth, environmental impacts, climate change and sustainable development in formulating policies. These are further elaborated below.

23. Notably, SP3 adopts policy diagnoses through voluntary processes – voluntary peer reviews of competition laws, *Services Policy Reviews*, national green export reviews and gender impact assessments of trade policies – as the entry points, thus securing national commitment and ownership in the processes. This is stated as a key factor in enabling policy changes and is appreciated by almost all respondents.

2. Evidence of influence in national policy processes

24. As a principle, UNCTAD does not seek to change policies directly, and only provides evidence-based analysis leading to policy alternatives for national stakeholders to eventually assess and formulate as appropriate. Some changes are dependent on parliamentary legislation and involve decision makers who are often not the prime stakeholders of UNCTAD. Thus, a direct link to programmatic support is neither ascertainable nor claimed. The evaluation notes several first-hand illustrations of policy and regulatory changes initiated based on SP3, as mentioned by stakeholders.

25. Mentions of definitive policy change actions (and in some cases, trade results) include the following areas: trade policy frameworks (Jamaica, Lesotho, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania); WTO accession support (Azerbaijan and the Lao People's Democratic Republic); services (China, Lesotho, Peru, Rwanda and Uganda); creative economy (China and Turkey); environment (Colombia, Ecuador, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Peru and Uganda); and competition policy and consumer protection (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe). This list is partial and only features mentions by beneficiaries. A more detailed assessment of results under each expected accomplishment follows.

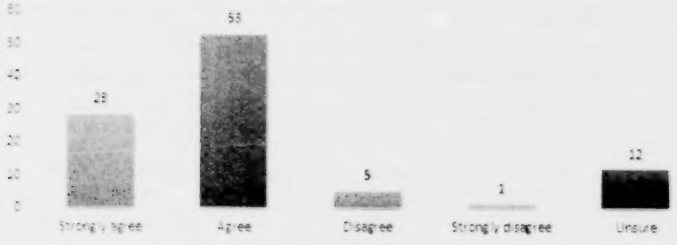
26. With regard to expected accomplishment (a), SP3 engages continuously with trade negotiators (country-level and based in Geneva, Switzerland) to assist in technical matters related to multilateral, regional and bilateral negotiations (figure 3). Substantive support in the past five years has covered agriculture, services and non-agricultural market access, besides other requests, including support for participation in several regional meetings, such as LDC retreats organized around the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in Bali, Indonesia and assistance to African countries under the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and economic partnership agreements of the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP).

27. UNCTAD support towards WTO accession is widely appreciated, including through letters of appreciation. Several stakeholders state that UNCTAD assistance is valuable, highly responsive to specific needs and complementary. UNCTAD support includes analysing policy alternatives and implications and supplementing WTO training courses. Some member States note that the advice is neutral, free of ideology and not prescriptive.

28. A small cross-section states that UNCTAD is good at covering the basics of accession but not necessarily the more advanced stages of negotiation. A few note that DITC does not respond to queries as quickly as other, smaller organizations and its advice should contain more pro-development options. Some respondents note that staff resources are inadequate to address all requests and it is not clear how UNCTAD prioritizes these.

Figure 3

UNCTAD provides a significant level of training and capacity-building for policymakers



29. SP3 helps deepen countries' understanding of market access and utilization of the Generalized System of Preferences and Global System of Trade Preferences through regional seminars, training, a unique database on the Generalized System and several handbooks. The successful completion of the Global System in 2010, expanding market access preferences on the part of 11 developing countries, is noted as a key contribution.

30. SP3 contributes significantly to the assessment and formulation of comprehensive development-oriented trade policy frameworks for countries, including Angola, Jamaica, Mexico, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Beneficiaries in Rwanda cite this assistance as key to the State's cross-border trade strategies and regional trade logistics initiatives. Similarly, Jamaica is implementing several recommendations of the trade policy framework review, especially related to a logistics hub.

31. UNCTAD support on services is widely appreciated for its evidence-based influence on trade and sector policies. According to member States, methodologies, tools and multi-stakeholder consultations under *Services Policy Reviews* resulted in better appreciation of the role and importance of services in trade and development. There is improved understanding of the General Agreement on Trade in Services and the four modes, including mode 4, which is of particular importance to developing countries and LDCs. Global Services Forum events in partnership with China and Qatar are another outcome of the work on services.

32. To date, 12 *Services Policy Reviews* have been completed, using a standard methodology that may be replicated in other sectors. Beneficiaries in Peru and Uganda are highly satisfied with the results, which led to definite policy actions and legislation in the two countries. The work of SP3 on services is among the best illustrations of a mutually reinforcing balance across the three pillars: research papers inform the multi-year expert meetings on services, trade and development; the meetings lead to specific requests for in-country work on services policy; and compilations of best practices are disseminated at the expert meetings.

33. With regard to expected accomplishment (b), the work of SP3 under trade analysis comes across as mixed. On the one hand, there is meticulous and sustained work on trade information (trade statistics, tariff profiles, non-tariff measures, analysis tools and analytical research publications). On the other hand, there are also one-time interventions, notably in dynamic sectors of trade and creative economy.

34. Principal contributions are the country-specific compilations for non-tariff measures, and the Trade Analysis and Information System, which contains a comprehensive compilation of data on tariff schedules, preferences and non-tariff measures, besides trade statistics at the tariff line level. Data from the Information System are used by a growing number of researchers, government officials, private users and users in academia, as well as in the official publications of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and WTO, as well as United Nations agencies. The Trade Analysis Branch also initiated a South-South trade database on bilateral trade flows, filling data gaps in the UNCTAD Commodity Trade Statistics Database, especially from smaller countries.

35. SP3 has structured useful partnerships with AfDB, ITC (Transparency in Trade initiative), the World Bank and WTO in collecting and reporting trade data, tariff profiles and non-tariff measures, resulting in several useful publications and tools, notably the Common Market Access Database and country-wide compilations on non-tariff measures, now available for 34 countries. This collaboration on statistics, based on a division of labour, is among the best illustrations of inter-agency cooperation noted in the evaluation.

36. Other outputs – with regard to dynamic sectors of trade, creative economy, etc. - despite their usefulness, appear as one-time, based on funding from the United Nations Development Account and United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

Stakeholders are appreciative of contributions by UNCTAD to work on creative industries, especially the *Creative Economy Reports* in 2008 and 2010, and note that the special edition of the report in 2013 (which had less UNCTAD involvement) is not as useful as it lacks trade dimensions brought in by UNCTAD in the earlier reports. The concept of creative cities resonated, especially in China and Turkey, which raised funds to implement city-level projects from ideas that originated in these reports. Another useful result is the inclusion by Cabo Verde of creative industries for support under Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) projects.

37. In the area of trade, gender and development, the main outputs are the country case studies entitled "Who is benefiting from trade liberalization in [State]? A gender perspective" that use a custom-built methodology to assess policy impacts on economic transformation and gender relations, especially the impact on women, across value chains. The seven studies to date in Angola, Bhutan, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Lesotho, Rwanda and Uruguay have received wide attention from policymakers and development agencies, as confirmed first-hand in Lesotho and Rwanda. The studies, a teaching package on trade and gender, an eight-week online course for policymakers and an event on women in development at UNCTAD XIII were appreciated by beneficiary countries and donors. The work of TGS is another example of best practices of the three-pillar approach and interdivisional and inter-agency cooperation.

38. The studies and national workshops are influential in shaping policies and programmes, for instance in Rwanda, where women are exposed to physical and financial risks in cross-border trade, and in Lesotho, where the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is using the knowledge to inform its work on trade policy and employment policy. The good quality and growing demand justify a proper work programme for trade, gender and development, including more predictable extrabudgetary support. However, the evaluation noted a need for greater involvement of the trade ministry in implementing the recommendations from the studies, besides closer programmatic cooperation between TGS and the Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy Branch.

39. With regard to expected accomplishment (c), competition policy-related activities during the period under evaluation were implemented largely under regional programmes such as the Africa Competition Programme (AFRICOMP) and the technical assistance programme on competition and consumer protection policies for Latin America (COMPAL), as well as equivalents in the Arab States Region, Asia and the Balkans. The Competition Policy and Consumer Protection Branch is highly appreciated by beneficiaries and donors, and is cited as a unique offering of UNCTAD. Beneficiaries contacted by the evaluation team (in Armenia, Botswana, Ecuador, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Peru) state that strong in-house expertise, a formidable global network of competition experts and practitioners and the development orientation of UNCTAD offer an ideal and unparalleled package of assistance for developing countries in determining an appropriate competition policy regime consistent with their markets and industrial structures (a concentration of small and medium-sized enterprises). Several respondents state that their national laws are modelled largely on the United Nations model law. SP3 also facilitated contacts with developed countries for on-site training and twinning programmes (funded by other sources). The culture of voluntary peer reviews (26 reviews to date) brings greater national ownership of reforms in national policies and institutions. The popularity of the competition policy work is demonstrated by the trend of increasing self-financing. For example, donor funding for COMPAL was reduced from 80 per cent in the first phase to less than 20 per cent, as several countries brought in their own funding. In addition, AFRICOMP – which could not complete all its activities due to challenges beyond the control of the subprogramme – was substantially funded by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Finally, countries are increasingly funding the attendance of national experts at meetings of the intergovernmental group of experts.

40. Strong regional partnerships are becoming a key strength of the branch, as evidenced in Latin America, with the Peruvian agency Indecopi set to play a supporting role in delivering the third phase of COMPAL. The creation of research partnership platforms and university-level courses in competition law and the establishment of regional centres (in Bulgaria, Oman and Tunisia) are good examples of effective leveraging of regional assets and partnerships. Contributions from an advisory group of experts, drawn from former heads of competition agencies, further strengthen outputs of the competition work of SP3.

41. Among the overall positive observations, a few delegates observe that the branch does not sufficiently inform or even invite delegates based in Geneva – who are the negotiators shaping agreed conclusions – to meetings of the intergovernmental group of experts related to consumer protection legislation, and note that an overemphasis on results should not hasten the due process of deliberation by delegates on issues.

42. With regard to expected accomplishment (d), TED addresses the mandate of UNCTAD to integrate sustainable development objectives across development strategies through a variety of initiatives. Positive feedback on useful contributions across this combination of upstream and downstream activities was provided to the evaluation team.

43. With regard to the work of SP3 on biotrade, beneficiaries as well as partner agencies such as CBD, CITES and PhytoTrade Africa attest to the useful long-standing contributions of UNCTAD, including coining the term biotrade itself. UNCTAD has been instrumental in creating a framework of assessments, guidelines and practices for sustainable trade in biodiversity products and for generating widespread awareness through appropriate conference instruments, including the biannual Conference of the Parties of CITES and, since 2012, the BioTrade Congress events initiated under SP3. The relevance of SP3 will increase under the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

44. SP3 partnered with the Andean Development Corporation and Global Environment Facility in regional projects in the Andean Community (Ecuador, Peru and Colombia), resulting in the identification of high-potential products and creating and training the supply community in qualifying practices for classification as biotrade products. Countries report increases in acreages and unit prices. However, national partners find it difficult to carry out biotrade impact assessments as prescribed and seek more basic solutions, given the nascence of the sector. The projects prepared studies and guidelines for sustainable trade, traceability and related aspects for a number of products based on species listed in CITES, including python skins and candelilla wax. Donors and partners express appreciation for the work on biotrade, which has received continued extrabudgetary support for years.

45. Notwithstanding the success in downstream aspects, there are some upstream issues to be addressed, for instance the appropriate classification or subtariff class for biotrade products and, in due course, incentivization of market access. At present, the only differentiator for biotrade products is the price premium paid by discerning private customers.

46. The upstream work of SP3 on organic agriculture began in 2001, when UNCTAD joined an international task force to reconcile numerous mandatory and voluntary standards, and continued with the Global Organic Market Access project for development of regional organic standards and an international reference standard (Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards). SP3 also established the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, ITC, UNEP and UNIDO, to deal with the increasing list of standards. This upstream work was complemented by field projects such as support to Uganda's organic agriculture policy and United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and

Productive Capacity projects in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania, to build supply capacities and links to markets. In the past few years, organic supplies in the Lao People's Democratic Republic have risen from one farm to more than 150 farms covering 50,000 hectares. Partners and national stakeholders cite UNCTAD support in providing guidance on policy, national standards and market access requirements, while other partners focus directly on exporters.

47. SP3 makes significant contributions through its climate change programme. Besides support to UNFCCC deliberations, it has provided country-level support – to several small island States in ACP and other States such as Ecuador – in the identification of high-potential green sectors for domestic markets and green exports, in some cases using national green export reviews as an entry point. Work through the consensus-building pillar focuses on the use of domestic support measures, including local content requirements in green sectors, consistent with international trade rules. However, environment and sustainable development-related concerns need to become more integrated and mainstreamed in trade policy analysis and advice and will require more interbranch cooperation in future.

C. Factors contributing to the subprogramme's results

1. Research and analysis

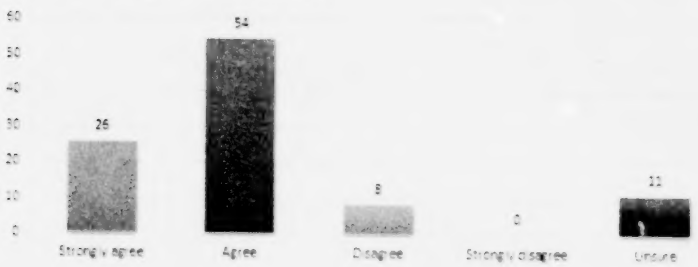
48. Stakeholders consider the resident research and analysis capabilities of UNCTAD to be its principal source of comparative advantage (figure 4). The work programmes for the three bienniums covered by the evaluation list 55 or more publications per biennium (annex A, table A6). Several of these also inform intergovernmental bodies and technical cooperation activities and are used as background materials at workshops and seminars.

49. Stakeholders note some publications as highly informative and useful in guiding policy actions. At the same time, many observe that there are simply too many publications. As a result, only a few reports stand out and attract attention.

50. Cumulative online downloads for a sample of DITC publications ranged from 115 to 51,952 downloads, and only 11 of the 29 sample publications were downloaded more than 1,000 times (annex A, table A8).

Figure 4

UNCTAD effectively disseminates its research and analytical products among its national and regional stakeholders



51. Internet connectivity limits the effectiveness of online dissemination in the digitally divided world and causes a continuing need for printed documents. Providing print copies to a complex and wide list of stakeholders is another logistical challenge to be addressed.

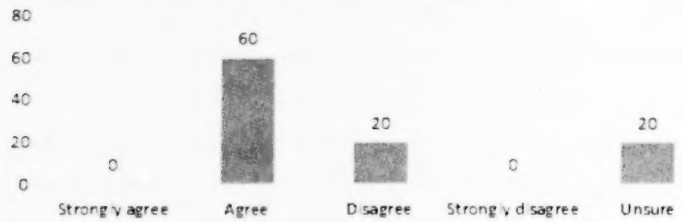
52. The low consumption of several outputs calls for both rationalization and more effective communications and dissemination. Information surfeit is not an issue originating in SP3 per se, as the number and titles of recurrent and non-recurrent publications are decided by member States. Any decisions to reduce the number of communications would need to be taken by the Trade and Development Board. Since 2012, UNCTAD has embarked on a phased reduction in the number of publications by 20 per cent per biennium. However, there is still a need to adequately promote research products.

2. Intergovernmental consensus building

53. The three-pillar approach of UNCTAD assumes that permanent missions based in Geneva are the principal pathways to share and further disseminate knowledge from sessions of the Trade and Development Board and its subsidiary bodies to stakeholders at the country level (figure 5). However, the small size of missions, at times the absence of trade specialists and an increasing portfolio of agencies and range of subjects requiring specific domain expertise can limit the substantive participation of delegates. Additionally, the participation of experts from LDCs is limited by a lack of funds. Many missions do not have adequate representation from trade, industry, agriculture and other ministries relevant to trade policy and negotiations. Therefore, the diffusion of knowledge from Geneva to country-level experts is heavily dependent on mission resources. This creates a need for SP3 to make effective use of regional events and technical cooperation to interact at the country level, when needed.

Figure 5

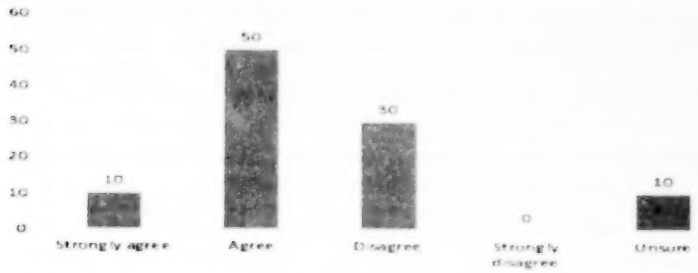
The division holds prior consultations and briefings for delegates on topics for the Trade and Development Board and its subsidiary bodies



54. The quality of discussion at intergovernmental meetings depends on the relevance and timely availability of background documents (figure 6 and figure 7). The 14 weeks of lead time for the processing of parliamentary documents, including policy clearance, editing and translation by the United Nations Office at Geneva, and at times the late availability of background materials, result in late circulation and English-only versions of materials being made available at meetings. This has a direct impact on the quality of participation in meetings.

Figure 6

Members of and attendees at the Trade and Development Board and subsidiary bodies, including expert meetings, receive background research and policy analysis documents sufficiently well in advance

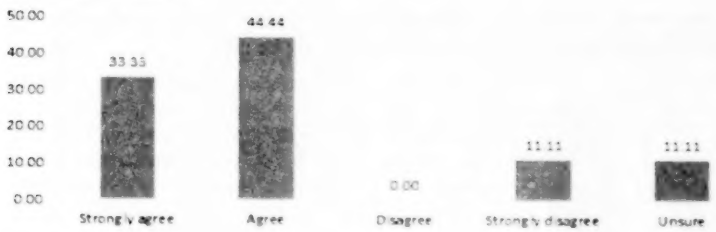


55. SP3 has used the intergovernmental group of experts and multi-year expert meeting platforms well to create awareness and demand for policy reviews and formulation, besides sharing results and best practices from technical cooperation, especially in competition policy and services. The increasing trend of self-financing for expert meetings attests to the usefulness of the platform for cross-fertilization of knowledge and reinforcing of peer networks. The success justifies extending these approaches to other areas, particularly peer reviews and twinning exercises for sector-level policies, gender mainstreaming and environment and sustainable development policies.

56. Some delegates in Geneva state that the research and analysis and consensus building work could be improved, through broader coverage of policy options for development in parliamentary documents, research and publications.

Figure 7

There are extensive substantive discussions at the Trade and Development Board and subsidiary bodies, including expert meetings, on research and analytical outputs in international trade



3. Technical cooperation activities

57. SP3 has an impressive coverage of countries in its technical cooperation activities, including advisory missions, training workshops and seminars. It addressed 127 of 419 requests across the 17 thematic clusters of UNCTAD in 2012–2014 (annex A, table A4).[4]

[4] This list was provided by the Technical Cooperation Service and is not exhaustive. In addition, the nine requests received by TED compiles requests from several countries and underreport the demand for technical cooperation for TED.

58. Geographical coverage is spread uniformly across regions (annex A, table A5). More than half of the activities of SP3 are in Africa. LDCs and countries in special situations, although Latin America has the highest number of technical cooperation activities (due to the intensity of work on competition law and consumer protection).

59. Considerable extrabudgetary staff resources are used in outputs under trade and gender, competition policy and environment, climate change and sustainable development, as shown in table 2. Donors note many one-time, small-budget projects driven by one or two staff and lacking critical mass and scalability to show sustainable results.

Table 2

Subprogramme 3: Regular budget and extrabudgetary share of work programme outputs, by number of work months, 2010–2011 and 2012–2013

		Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy Branch	*Trade Analysis Branch*	*Competition Policy and Consumer Protection Branch*	*Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch*	*Trade and Gender Section*	*Total*
2010–2011	Regular budget	296	166	147	180	24	814
	Extrabudgetary	65	8	105	95	31	303
	Total	361	174	252	275	55	1 117
				Percentage			
	Extrabudgetary	22	4	42	38	56	27
2012–2013	Regular budget	274	163	147	191	24	769
	Extrabudgetary	61	21	98	97	63	340
	Total	335	154	245	288	87	1 109
				Percentage			
	Extrabudgetary	18	13	40	33	72	30

60. SP3 has built and makes effective use of field networks across regions and practice areas (figure 8). First-hand examples shared with the evaluation team were Biocan, Indecopi, PhytoTrade Africa and the SADC Competition Practitioners Network.

Figure 8

UNCTAD has strong national and regional partner networks that contribute to the deepening and dissemination of UNCTAD's work across regions

4. Resource mobilization and donor engagement

61. During the period under evaluation, the top contributors to SP3 were Norway, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UNDP and WAEMU. Donor support was concentrated in trade negotiations and competition policy. Overall, extrabudgetary support was less than budgeted, and fell from $3.5 million in 2010 to $1.9 million in 2013, and affected delivery trends. Funding revived in 2014, mainly through fresh infusions in competition policy, as shown in table 3.

Table 3

Subprogramme 3: Extrabudgetary resource mobilization trends

(In thousands of dollars)

Cluster (professional (P) and general service (G) staff posts)	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
Trade negotiations and commercial diplomacy (13 P and 4 G)	2 047	1 569	480	725	511
Trade analysis capacities and information systems (10 P and 6 G)	292	75	203	142	917
Trade, environment and development (9 P and 4 G)	-	42	68	200	150
Competition policy and consumer protection (7 P and 1 G)	1 111	382	1 020	832	2 432
Trade and gender (1 P)	100	70	458	77	49
Total	3 551	2 141	2 230	1 978	4 059

Note:Staff posts are funded by the regular budget

Source: Budget and Project Finance Section, 2014.

62. Predictable and multi-year donor funding has been instrumental in enabling a sustained, progressive, long-term focus in areas such as competition policy, biotrade and non-tariff measures, services and WTO accession. This only substantiates the beneficial effect of predictable, multi-year and non-earmarked funds to enhance results effectiveness.

63. Some donors find it difficult to comprehend the specific competencies of DITC, and state that the mandate is too wide and needs a more focused approach, especially in WTO accession, dispute settlement and, to some extent, trade policy assistance. This is accentuated by a lack of structured partnerships with ITC, WTO and others. However, there is appreciation of specific and concrete work areas, such as voluntary peer reviews of competition law and policy, biotrade, organic agriculture standards, trade and gender and *Service Policy Reviews*, where linkages with national policies and development benefits, besides alignment with donor priorities, are more concretely demonstrated.

64. Some donors observe that DITC needs to articulate its comparative advantage, offerings and results more effectively to Geneva-based permanent missions and at the country level, and also streamline donor engagement. They advise that they are contacted by the Technical Cooperation Service and by multiple divisional staff, resulting in conflicting demands for prioritization and allocations. The existing results framework lacks clear success indicators to demonstrate outcomes and SP3 (and UNCTAD as a whole) needs to demonstrate the effectiveness of its Geneva-based upstream analysis and policy advice and also devote sufficient time for strategic work related to the Trade and Development Board.

5. Communications and dissemination

65. Communications is a weak area in DITC, in part because it is the only division without a flagship report and thus without opportunities and experience to undertake major launch and communications events, and also because mass communications and digital media skills are not its core expertise. However, there are several interesting and newsworthy messages across the work of SP3, for example in gender, trade negotiations, services, biotrade, sustainable development goals, etc. Unfortunately, these cannot be harnessed in the absence of a concerted communications strategy.

66. DITC attempted to involve the Communications, Information and Outreach Unit (CIU) in enhancing the division's online and offline communications around key events such as the BioTrade Congress and the Global Services Forum in Beijing. However, there is need for a divisional communications plan supported by a budget for interns and outsourced copywriters, in cooperation with CIU.

D. Efficiency

1. Complementary use of three core modalities of work

67. Data for 2010–2011 and 2012–2013 show the split across the three pillars as follows (annex A, table A3):

(a) Research publications accounted for 391 of 1,117 (35 per cent) and 402 of 1,109 (36 per cent) work months, respectively.

(b) Advisory services, workshops and seminars and field projects accounted for 490 of 1,117 (44 per cent) and 478 of 1,109 work months (43 per cent), respectively.

(c) Parliamentary documentation and substantive services for meetings and expert groups accounted for 211 of 1,117 (19 per cent) and 199 of 1,109 (18 per cent) work months, respectively, or one fifth of the human resources of SP3.

68. SP3 completed its work outputs on time, with the exception of a few postponed publications. In 2010–2013, SP3 posted an 89 per cent utilization rate for extrabudgetary funds, spending $15.65 million against a budgeted $17.60 million (annex A, table A2). In the competition policy area, delivery expanded significantly, with supplementary funding for voluntary peer reviews (12 reviews against the initial target of four). Similarly, SP3 used expert meetings and regional events efficiently to promote the experiences and results of *Services Policy Reviews*, resulting in increased demand for Reviews or adaptation of existing policies without commissioning a full-fledged Review.

69. Several stakeholders are appreciative of DITC's high responsiveness to requests. However, this opinion is not unanimous. The results of the e-survey indicate a large share of respondents feel unsure about the adequacy and efficiency of responses (figure 9).

Figure 9

UNCTAD responds adequately and efficiently to technical cooperation requests submitted by member States

2. Synergies with other subprogrammes

70. DITC has made considerable effort towards building synergies and there are good illustrations of effective interdivisional cooperation. Cooperation is particularly good with the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes (ALDC), Division on Technology and Logistics (DTL) and Division on Investment and Enterprise (DIAE). Illustrations of cooperation with DIAE include the following: contributions to the

World Investment Report on trade aspects, to *Investment Policy Reviews* and on competition policy related to investment; non-tariff measures aspects of trade-related investment measures and investment policy measures; investment linkages in services; and joint contributions in online and Paragraph 166 courses (in cooperation with DTL). There is scope for further cooperation in trade and investment statistics, especially in the context of global value chains, mode 3 services (investment measures, including low-carbon investments linked to environmental subsidies), etc.

71. Examples of cooperation with ALDC include the following: Diagnostic Trade Integration Study preparation for Ethiopia and the Gambia; creative economy in Cabo Verde and Mozambique; country case studies on trade and gender in Angola and Rwanda; and joint missions to regional conference events such as African Union meetings on intra-Africa trade. The current level and spirit of cooperation – observed first-hand by the evaluation team in Lesotho – augurs well for greater results and cost-effectiveness in the work of UNCTAD in Africa and LDCs and other structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies. However, there is a need to more effectively promote the full breadth of the expertise of UNCTAD at the country level. As it is geographically structured, subprogramme 5 has the best opportunities to interface at the country level and support this effort. The evaluation team notes that this combination of functional and geographic specialization is critical for results effectiveness at the national level, and should be encouraged, incentivized and monitored in the future.

72. Cooperation with the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies (GDS) appears to be only on statistics. It is noteworthy that DITC does not have a substantial contribution to the flagship *Trade and Development Report*. At the same time, SP3 outnumbers subprogramme 1 in the number of policy research outputs, but these lack the readership, profile, authority and appeal of the *Trade and Development Report*. Several publications are prepared without contributions or peer reviews by other divisions.[5] Also, the titles of some expert meetings and publications of the two subprogrammes indicate overlaps and potential for more synergy (annex A, table A7).

73. Given the low readership of several publications, as noted in paragraph 49, there is merit in rationalizing the number of publications and considering a few joint products, to build a culture of coherent messaging across divisions, which has not always been the case. This is also rooted in the larger institutional culture of siloed functioning as noted by UNCTAD staff across divisions.

74. However, a number of UNCTAD staff note that the present leadership has made sincere attempts to break internal silos and proactively secure interdivisional synergies, within institutional constraints. These efforts must continue and also be supported, as SP3 (and the organization) addresses a new mandate from the fourteenth session of the Conference on Trade and Development and new development approaches necessitated by sustainable development goals.

3. Inter-agency cooperation

75. SP3 demonstrates a culture of collaboration with a number of regional and technical agencies. Notable among these are partnerships in trade statistics, tariffs and non-tariff measures with AfDB, ITC, the World Bank and WTO; partnerships with United Nations Regional Commissions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America; and thematic partnerships with CITES on biodiversity and regional competition networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America under COMPAL. There are also positive examples of cooperation, in

[5] This may also be the case for other divisions, but could not be studied by this evaluation. However, country case studies on trade and gender were peer reviewed by ALDC.

the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania, under the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity and United Nations "Delivering as one" initiative. However, there are opportunities to deepen collaboration under this initiative, with UNCTAD taking the role of internal mentor and expertise provider to resident agencies on trade issues. Again, this requires closer cooperation between DITC, ALDC, donors and United Nations agencies with a field presence.

4. Results-based management

76. The results indicators for SP3 (and the entire programme of UNCTAD) are elementary and, given the numerous touch points with countries, too easy to attain. They merely report the number of countries benefited as the indicator, without detailed evidence of specific development results linked to programmatic interventions. Reporting is more action-language rather than change-language oriented, which is fundamental to a results-based management framework.

77. An UNCTAD-wide results-based management framework exercise was initiated in 2013, but its progress has been reportedly slow. Although its architecture is not known to the evaluation, it is important to incorporate more formal feedback and reporting to the Trade and Development Board by member States on the specific use and results of the knowledge and capacities supported by UNCTAD.

III. Conclusions

78. Based on the inputs and primary information, the evaluation concludes that component 1 of SP3 has been relevant and responsive to the needs of its stakeholders and has made material contributions across its work streams to strengthen understanding, analysis and policy formulation capacities in a large number of developing countries, especially in Africa, LDCs, landlocked developing countries, SIDS and other structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies, as well as middle-income countries and transition economies.

79. An institutional culture of commitment to the development linkages of trade, resident technical expertise in multiple domains, connections to strong global expert networks and convening power as a United Nations agency constitute the core positioning of UNCTAD in a crowded development ecosystem. These advantages have manifested into concrete results in areas that received sustained and predictable extrabudgetary support.

80. SP3 has developed useful methodologies, tools and approaches that lend to standardization and replication, thus creating a new class of public goods in the areas of non-tariff measures, competition policy, services policy, biotrade and trade and gender, which can be extended to other sectors as well.

81. SP3 has to balance a very broad mandate and a wide and dispersed set of stakeholder needs, with limited and even dwindling donor support, often earmarked by themes and beneficiaries, and compete with others, including bilateral agencies. In addition, the post of director was vacant for a significant duration during the period under evaluation. SP3 has managed this difficult balance well, and showed good achievements with extrabudgetary resources of less than $1 million per year per cluster.

82. SP3 pursues and attains good levels of inter-agency cooperation with a number of international and regional agencies across all practice areas and is able to demonstrate good interdivisional partnerships with some divisions, although not sufficiently with one division that has close thematic and policy analysis links with SP3. Some factors causing this

suboptimal cooperation are beyond the control of the subprogramme and due efforts are being made to address these through divisional compacts.

83. There are challenges in demonstrating synergies and concrete outcomes from research publications and intergovernmental consensus work, which take up a huge share of programme budgets and are delivered mainly in Geneva, although there are examples of effective interpillar linkages in competition policy and services policy work. Some factors are beyond the influence of the subprogramme, are rooted in the architecture of UNCTAD and need to be resolved at an organization-wide level and by member States directly. However, SP3 cannot effectively communicate its offerings, comparative advantage and key messages from its huge body of work in the absence of a proper communications strategy.

84. The results indicators for SP3, as for all UNCTAD subprogrammes, are elementary and numeric in nature. Given its numerous touch points for interacting with countries individually and as groups, numerical coverage is a rather easy target to claim. A robust results framework is necessary to track evidence of specific country-level impacts linked to programmatic interventions under the three pillars.

IV. Strategic and operational recommendations

85. The United Nations is in the process of finalizing the post-2015 development agenda and adopting sustainable development goals. From a programming perspective, compared to the isolated mention in Millennium Development Goal 8, the prominent mention of trade in sustainable development goals (explicitly in goals 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 17, and implicitly in goals 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 13) has implications for the strategy and workplans of UNCTAD and potentially the organization's structure. SP3 must respond to the new development paradigm and its multiple dimensions, all within the constraints of fixed regular budget resources.

A. Programme design

86. Recommendation 1: To respond to sustainable development goals and improve resource allocation efficiency and interdisciplinary synergies, consider formulating an integrated divisional programme or at least branch-wide programmes with appropriate change-language indicators to show contributions, synergies and impacts of activities.

B. Effectiveness

87. Recommendation 2. Review and optimize the number of publications and e-publications through member State and interdivisional consultations, and initiate a few joint publications with ALDC and GDS, under divisional compacts.

88. Recommendation 3. Broaden, as necessary, the policy alternatives for development in the elaboration of policy advice, publications, technical cooperation, parliamentary documents and other activities related to the subprogramme.

89. Recommendation 4. Link the trade and gender work programme more directly and enhance the advocacy function of TGS in trade policy formulation initiatives, while retaining the specific identity of TGS as the UNCTAD-wide lead on gender mainstreaming.

90. Recommendation 5. Explore to the extent possible potential cost efficiencies in hosting arrangements, logistics and schedules of regional courses of UNCTAD and WTO.

91. Recommendation 6. Evolve methodologies for capturing environmental goods and services trade flows and explore, through the consensus building pillar, member State consultations on potential tariff classifications for environmental goods and services; analyse environmental regulations in the context of non-tariff measures; and explore design of a policy tracker for all countries across key domains, using the same sources and tools as for data collection on non-tariff measures.

92. Recommendation 7. Add the dimension of climate change, environment and sustainable development in all trade policy advice through joint workplans with TED.

93. Recommendation 8. Consider a pilot for joint programming with ALDC covering needs assessments, marketing and communications, mission coordination and planning, resource mobilization and implementation of trade-related capacity development projects, including EIF.

94. Recommendation 9. Under donor-funded United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity projects, pilot memorandums of understanding with front line agencies and build in mentoring and trade-related capacity development of resident agency staff by UNCTAD.

95. Recommendation 10. Include offices of relevant and appropriate non-governmental organizations, aid institutions and bilateral aid agencies in invitations to relevant seminars and launch events.

C. Communications

96. Recommendation 11. Subsume all publications and dissemination-related activities under an integrated communications plan, jointly with CIU, for key outputs from the three pillars, integrating electronic and social media tools for outreach and stakeholder engagement.

D. Other

97. Recommendation 12. Formulate, with external support if necessary, biennial work programmes using results-based management best practices, and select more concrete indicators corresponding to overarching economic, social and environmental goals and targets enshrined in sustainable development goals.

98. Recommendation 13. In the design and prioritization of technical assistance, consider country capacities and willingness to assume implementation commitments in regulatory, policy and institutional reforms and to report results to the Trade and Development Board.